City Space Architecture

The Intangible Values of Placemaking in Engaging Youth for Activating and Shaping Places in Italy

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Abstract

Placemaking represents a multifunctional approach to urban design that brings together communities around places to foster their sense of belonging and enhance the identity of urban spaces. These places represent the backbone of the city, not only for their physical dimension, but also for social and cultural interactions, where youth have an active role in envisioning a new future for cities by actively participating in placemaking processes, acquiring a strong sense of ownership, and creating youth-friendly places. In that vision, schools can boost this approach by starting to rethink public spaces around them together with students. This study addresses, firstly, the necessity to recognise the intangible values of urban projects by assessing the values of a placemaking process when no physical changes have yet been realised. Secondly, it delves into the benefits of engaging youth in the creation of inclusive and sustainable cities. It examines how youth engagement in these processes can be advantageous and how schools can play a crucial role in the development of public spaces by participating in placemaking activities.

To address these research questions and evaluate the intangible values, an "Impacts Assessment Framework" was developed. This tool helps reconsider challenges by expanding their scope and seeking solutions. The framework was also used to evaluate the "Carpi Campus" experience, assessing the impacts of intangible values from the initial phase, even before physical changes were implemented. The intangible values of placemaking in engaging youth include understanding and addressing complex issues pedagogically, training in active citizenship (including typically excluded individuals in urban planning), and fostering new design abilities for envisioning future scenarios.

Keywords: youth empowerment, youth-friendly places, innovative teaching methods, intangible values, Impacts Assessment Framework

1. Introduction

1.1 The role of Placemaking process into urban design

Discussing urban design means having a more layered and complex understanding of context, encompassing a place's history, people, functional aspects, form, and unique identity.

In this sense, placemaking emerges as a valuable approach that emphasises the essential connection between people and places. Centred around community-based participation, a successful placemaking process leverages assets, inspiration, and potential of a local community. This leads to the development of high-quality public spaces that enhance people's health, happiness, and overall well-being (PPS, 2007).

1.2 Placemaking influences physical spaces and communities in both tangible and intangible ways

While there is no singular, rigid definition or methodology for placemaking, its core principles can be summarised as follows: it is an open-ended process involving active community participation, aiming to create inclusive, safe, healthy, and attractive places while understanding and enhancing local identity. Placemaking considers physical, social, ecological, cultural, and spiritual qualities of places, combining top-down planning with bottom-up initiatives for a democratic and inclusive approach (PPS, 2007). It brings together diverse stakeholders, enriching urban projects with varied perspectives and creating intangible values that enhance vibrancy and liveability. Emphasising community engagement over measurable outcomes, placemaking includes youth to foster ownership and connection. Engaging young people through workshops and collaborative activities often results in high-quality research outcomes (Millard, 2015).

The primary question at the base of the research is how to effectively engage youth in designing public spaces. Listening to and involving users is essential for creating inclusive spaces (Campioli, 2020, p. 182). High school students have been pivotal in transforming anonymous spaces into vibrant campuses, emphasising sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Assessing the benefits of youth involvement through placemaking shows it fosters a sense of belonging to the community, crucial for individual and collective identity. Through co-design initiatives, it is possible to foster this feeling around places, extending not only among classmates but also involving all students and teachers about the project area. Diversity, community, and participation are three interconnected factors that shape the identity of places and communities (Peraboni, 2020, p. 8). The third theme explores the role of schools as catalysts for community and city development. Usually, schools have the potential to serve as a focal point for social activities for students, their families, and local citizens. The 2016 #Scuoleinnovative program of MIUR (Ministry of education) highlighted the importance of the relationship between schools and territory and it proposes schools as civic centres and multifunctional spaces to promote the socialisation, wealth, and well-being of students. As Nucci (2020, p.10) states, "school areas can become identity-creating and aggregating locations open to local inhabitants, to expand opportunities and occasions for the use of public spaces at various times of the day and, therefore, increasing the level of safety for those living in the neighbourhood." After the forced lockdown of the initial phase of the pandemic, the importance of more active learning and outdoor teaching was realised (Franciosi et al., 2020). Now, schools have the chance to rethink their teaching methods and spaces to enhance students' interactions and socialisation.

In various cities, numerous initiatives with schools fostered the intangible values of

placemaking through labs, participatory workshops, and third mission activities. These experiences demonstrate how young people can significantly contribute to projects with their reflections, ideas, and opinions. The "Carpi Campus" case study exemplifies this by involving high school students in creating a unified educational area that links five high schools, leveraging public space, regeneration programs, and community co-design for an inclusive and sustainable urban environment.

1.3 Theoretical framework of knowledge

Placemaking in urban design is a multifunctional approach that unites communities to foster their sense of belonging and to enhance place identity. It reinterprets urban design issues in social and political terms by involving people and addressing relevant questions for their daily lives with special attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place (PPS, 2007). Placemaking inspires people to collectively rethink spaces and recognise their potential, fostering the connection between people and places to maximise shared values (PPS, 2007). It is a process of creation, co-design, and activation aimed at empowering the community for the re-appropriation, re-signification, construction, and care of community spaces (Chrysostomou, 2021, p. 16). This organic and conscious approach reflects community needs and desires, improving the quality of daily life. Such places become both signifier and signified containers and content of material and immaterial elements, and serve as the city's backbone, promoting continuous social interactions and cultural development of a community (Colafranceschi and Nogué, 2021, p. 5). Placemaking can emphasise immaterial values derived from the community. Intangible values generate, build, and forge public space in its types, uses and forms of occupation (Colafranceschi and Nogué, 2021, p. 17). This approach transforms urban spaces into human-oriented places where people can recognise each other, produce personal memories, foster cultural and social histories, and enliven the sense of belonging through human and spatial relationships. Public space is not a common "void" within the urban settlement but a place of social access and existential exchange where everyone is welcome (Colafranceschi and Nogué, 2021, pp. 7, 8). It is a resource, a product, a social, political, and symbolic practice where people can express their opinion and are involved as protagonists (Almeida, Batista and Lourenço, 2020, p. 111). Effective engagement of people is a crucial characteristic of successful placemaking process; from the beginning citizens are involved as experts in setting the priorities and vision for the project and keep them engaged throughout implementation and beyond (Peinhardt and Storring, 2019). In this discussion, the whole community is involved, even people that usually are not considered in urban politics or the city's decision (i.e. youth). Youth can be resourceful in the decision-making process; as such, their inclusion must be recognised as an opportunity for the project of public spaces able to transform and shape communities and societies (Almeida, Batista and Lourenço, 2020, p. 111; Peinhardt and Storring, 2019). While participating in the design and construction process, young people develop skills, such as creating quality outputs, developing strong communication skills, and learning how to take part in creative problem solving. In this way, youth grow up as active citizens and contribute to the success of their places while acquiring a sense of responsibility. The public engagement of youth should be considered the key of placemaking; it gives them the opportunity to invest in their community and develop a strong knowledge about their everyday space (Kapoor, 2017). Through the eyes of young people, it is possible to activate and shape places, bringing within the project their needs and narrating their feelings, sensations, and

perceptions. In the future, this approach could have an impact on their life and the young will be able to use, manage, and support their spaces with awareness. This is a crucial point: promoting practical and participatory activities will create a powerful and long-lasting impact in youth's lives, able to connect them with their environment. Within that process, placemaking activities increase young people's knowledge and experience of the territory, promoting the use of space as both a site for learning and for living (Smaniotto et al., 2021, p. 140). Schools play an important role in this vision because they can boost this approach by starting to rethink public spaces around them together with students. Youth appreciate observing and experiencing places where they usually spend their time, and the unique qualities of learning can increase student interest and provide them a better understanding of how difficult problems related to projects can be solved. There is a potentiality of non-formal and interactive education by taking the "classroom" into different locations, increasing the youth's awareness of the space (Almeida, Batista and Lourenço, 2020, p. 122). By participating in placemaking, students develop a strong feeling of ownership creating youth-friendly places, improving beauty and delight, community health and safety, environmental sustainability, and the intangible "sense of place". However, youth involvement does not always yield immediate results, as previously mentioned; indeed, this urban transformation must first occur in the minds of the participants and then in the physical space (Silberberg et al., 2013, p. 3).

1.4 Research questions and objectives of the project

Through the features of placemaking, it is possible to understand the importance of engaging young people to rethink public spaces and to find out hidden and intangible values of the overall project. The habits, behaviours, rituals, feelings, and emotions of a community that cross a space are the intangible values and the immaterial glue of a project. These values can affect and change an individual's perception of a place, turning it into a centre of meaning and symbols, expressing very different thoughts (Colafranceschi and Nogué, 2021, p. 16). The placemaking process could create a new identity for emerging city places; make them more attractive for people; engage and collaborate with citiizens and institutions; increase their sense of belonging; trigger a transformation able to change the people's assessments passing on intangible values to future generations. All these intangible values are at the basis for the success of a placemaking project that needs the involvement of different stakeholders to create urban transformation and regeneration. This article aims to evaluate these values and address specific research questions:

1. How is it possible to assess the intangible values of a placemaking process if nothing material has yet been realised?
2. How is it possible to involve youth in design project to rethink public space and to create inclusive and sustainable cities?
3. What are the benefits and advantages to engage young people into these placemaking design?
4. How can schools play a crucial role in the involvement of young students for the transformation of public space?

What is interesting to understand is also how all these tangible elements can produce a series of intangible values during the placemaking process. This research article explores how to valuate these values into some practical experiences, particularly the Carpi Campus project, made in collaboration with university, municipal administration and high schools.

2. Methodology: how to interpret intangible values of placemaking through a framework

In the course of research activities, the main questions were: "Is it possible or not to evaluate the impacts of placemaking projects when the physical space is not changed, but the process is already started?" and "How to do that?". To answer these questions, instead of evaluating the results of spatial changes, the process itself was reinterpreted and re-evaluated as a factor able to generate impacts on the community involved. To do this assessment, a helpful tool was created that considered the main intangible values that arises from research and placemaking projects experienced by the authors. This tool is the "Impacts Assessment Framework" and includes the intangible values recognised in the research activities and projects collected by the authors.

This framework was developed from insights gained through previous research and a review of literature on placemaking principles, urban design, and youth involvement. With the knowledge acquired in the initial phase, creating a framework to evaluate values in urban design projects became essential. This paper details the development and application of this framework, tested through various urban experiences, with a particular focus on the Carpi Campus case study. The final phase involves assessing urban projects to measure intangible values, even for those not yet implemented or realised.

The Impacts Assessment Framework represents a "beta version" to evaluate projects and case studies. It helps to look at the design challenge more broadly by asking, "What is the inner meaning of this placemaking process ?" or "Why is this challenge crucial for the community ?". Other questions are "What have been done to move from 'space' to 'place' with the project?" so that it is possible to expand the scope of the project and focus on the intangible values that arise from it. To be more effective, the framework is divided into four sectors: Approach, Community, Places, and Communication. These sectors derived from a series of reflections developed during the initial research phase on placemaking and youth involvement. The insights were then put into practice within participatory initiatives where young people were the drivers of change.

Approach, Community, Places and Communication represent the most impactful sectors of a placemaking process, and even if they bring together different values, they should not be considered separate watertight compartments. They contaminate each other in a circular vision to create stronger and long-lasting impacts. It has been noted that there are some common values shared among the projects, but there also are some intangible values that could differ in every project because they are strictly connected to the specific goals, the environment, and the diverse needs and ambitions of communities. Since the surrounding conditions change, the intangible values will also be adapted, harmonised and reinterpreted in each specific case. Every placemaking process requires a deep understanding of context and lived experience; it is fundamental to recognise and respect the needs and values of people using the space the assets present in a place, engaging and cultivating trust among participants (Gardner, Marpillero-Colomina and Begault, 2018). Even if the intangible values represent only a part of the outcomes of the overall project, they have a great meaning because they have the power to build a "legacy" among the different participants. Those values reflect the cultural production of a community: their imagination, their perception, their feelings towards the landscape, places and their living spaces (Colafranceschi and Nogué, 2021, p. 16). Thus, attempting to comprehend those values means to seek how individuals relate to these identities and to places.

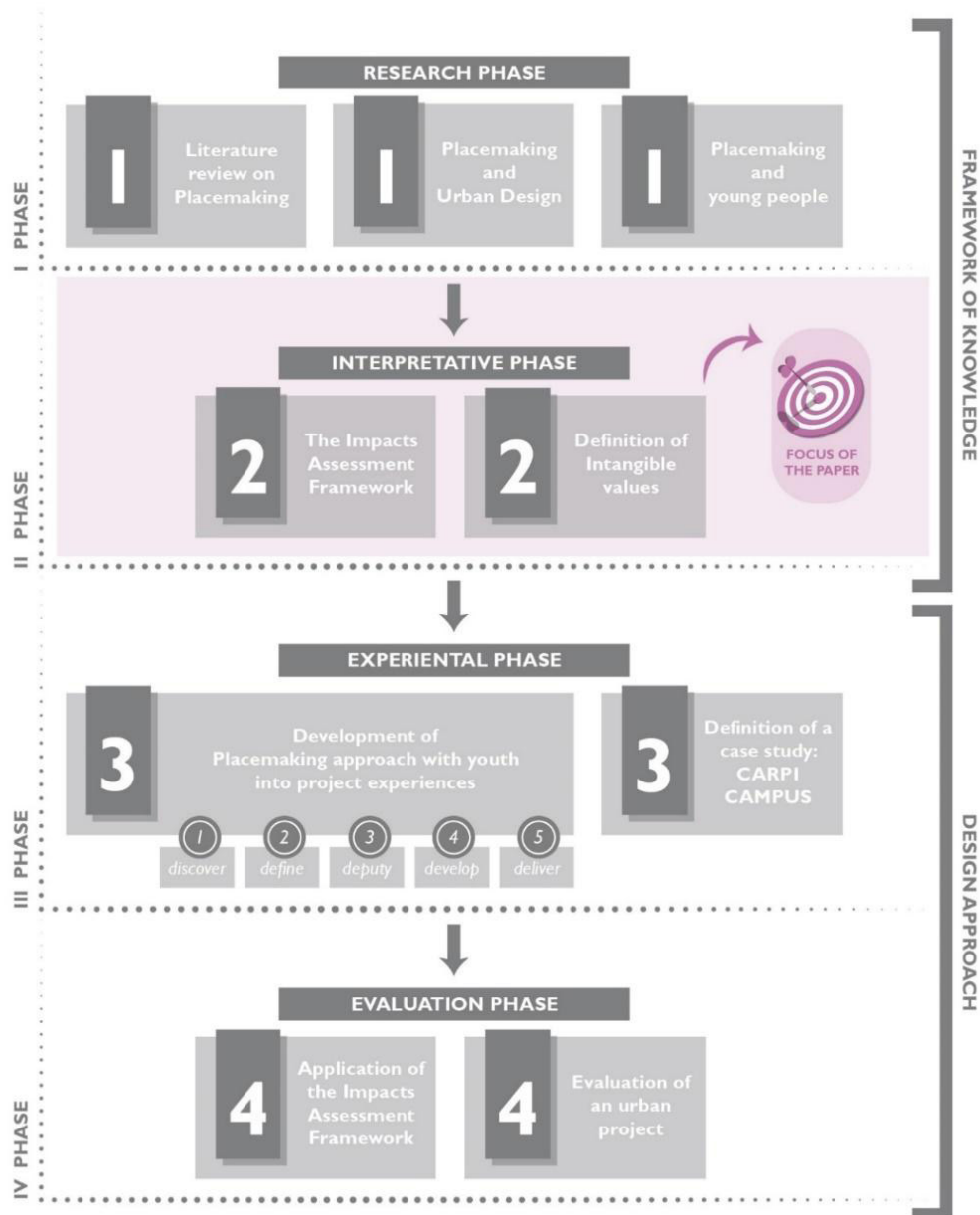To apply the "Impacts Assessment Framework", there is the need to rate all the intangible

Figure 1. General methodological scheme of the placemaking approach (source: authors)

values, giving them a score from 0% to 100%. This percentage is given considering the importance of each value within the project. So, there is the need to pay attention at the way the process is formulated and to the engagement of people. Moreover, there is the need to look at the interactions among participants: do they change or remain the same? Is trust among participants growing? Are they happy to participate, or do they feel frustrated? Did they speak about the project to someone else? Do they manifest their pleasure to share what they are doing? All these questions recall the importance of asking for feedback at the end of activities so that it is easier to monitor the progress and the overall behaviour. The percentage of each intangible value is not based on numbers or scientific calculation, but it is an assessment based on considerations that the leading theme of a placemaking process makes about the process itself and people engagement.

Evaluating these intangible values, however, is not a straightforward task, as it involves a series of unstable variables that vary according to the urban context, the people involved, the objectives to be achieved, and the resources available. Each experience is subjective and can determine different intangible values that change and adapt to the needs. In this sense, even this framework cannot provide an objective answer for diverse urban situations but is assessed subjectively with values ranging from 0 to 100%, depending on the results achieved, which are always variable and give them a certain validity.
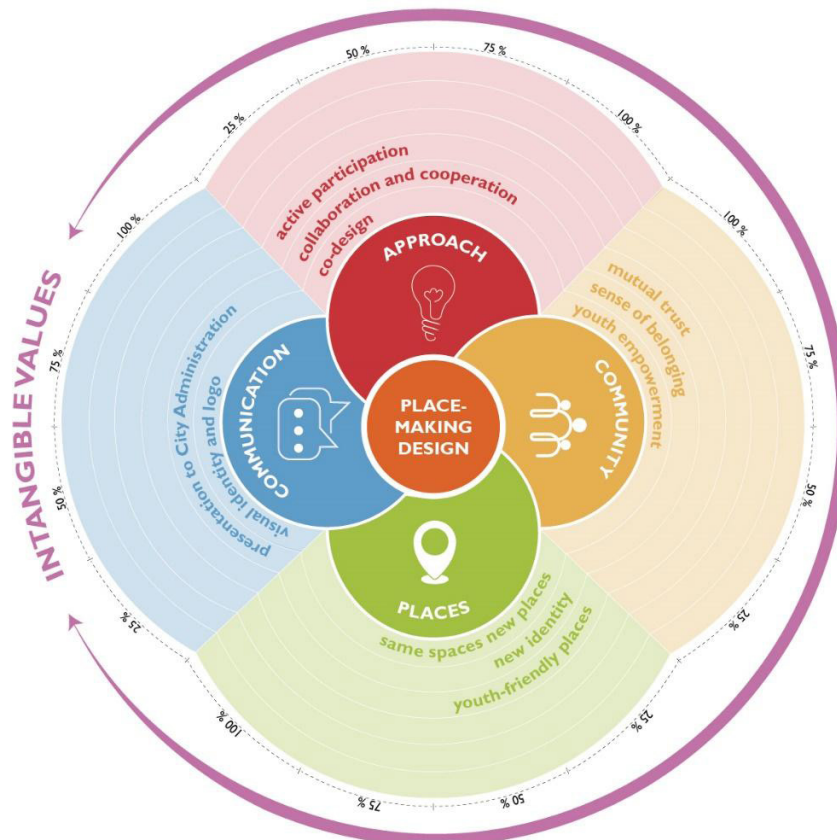

Figure 2. General "Impacts Assessment Framework" for the evaluation of intangible values
(source: authors)

2.1 Approach

The sector "Approach" outlines methods and placemaking techniques that promote inclusion, sharing, and collaboration principles among different stakeholders, emphasising intangible values. In this way, a relation can be created over time, defining a strong community with shared visions, aims, and values and improving its everyday life. To obtain these results, it is necessary to define some placemaking approaches that bridge the gap between top-down planning and bottom-up initiatives. This involves promoting collective and active participatory initiatives in which citizens are engaged as protagonists from the first phase of the design process, the design thinking, to the final one, the co-design. The intangible values that have emerged from research and projects are co-design, collaboration and active participation.

2.2 Community

Thanks to the constant involvement and active participation of diverse people in placemaking process, a strong "Community" can be built over time. One of the most remarkable returns on investment from placemaking is the improvement in social cohesion and community well-being. When people feel a connection to their environment, they are more likely to engage with their community and form social bonds (Wheeler, 2023). Thanks to youth engagement, it has been possible to include the entire school's community (composed of teachers, students, and their families) in different phases of the process. Regarding teachers and families, they were not directly involved in the definition of the design proposal of the campus, but students were encouraged to discuss needs and future perspectives of the area with them. For the community sector, the most important values that emerged are youth empowerment, sense of belonging and mutual trust.

2.3 Places

Public spaces are "Places" inside urban settlement of shared uses and activities where everyone feels welcome and where the greatest number of human interactions takes place. These great places can be created moving far from the simple definition of public spaces that considers only its physical and material dimension and starting to appreciate places that reflects the complexity of urban society; by means of this, social connections are cultivated and a sense of belonging between people is established. This sector represents the transition from 'space' to 'place' and includes all the activities designed to improve the quality of public spaces to make them more human-centred. For this sector, the most important values that emerged are youth-friendly places, the same spaces, new places, new identity.

2.4 Communication

> *"Storytelling is a powerful tool for contextualising interventions and weaving them into people's mental map, and a strong visual identity helps to enhance the overall impact and reach of a project" (Marko and Lisa, 2022, p. 60).*

Knowing how to communicate a project is fundamental because it can generate intangible values capable of creating a strong impact on communities and cities. Indeed, having a strategy and a plan on how to capture, promote and communicate the project is a key part of its success; on top of drawing an audience to the project, successful communication campaigns can also help to attract funding (Marko and Lisa, 2022, p. 60). It is not a matter of publicising the work done, but it is a telling of the whole experience, giving it value and making it appealing to people. For this sector, the most important values that emerged are visual identity and logo, and the presentation to City Administration.

3. Carpi Campus: The case study that best expresses the importance of youth engagements and the intangible values of placemaking

3.1 Introduction to the project

Carpi is a municipality of about 72.000 inhabitants in the province of Modena (north of Italy). The area of the Carpi Campus project extends in the west side of the city, close to the city centre, and it is set on an urban direction of primary importance, Via Peruzzi. The

area is surrounded by numerous parks and gardens for the elderly, a residential area with low density, public services, and sport facilities. Since there are five high schools alongside Via Peruzzi, this area presents itself as a natural campus devoted to education with a high density of students and teachers, but it does not have a clear identity, and its public spaces are not welcoming and attractive.

In 2022, the director of the scientific high school shared the idea of reshaping and giving a unique identity to that area engaging the authors as researchers of Politecnico di Milano. The idea to create a campus represented a great opportunity to develop the project with a placemaking approach involving students and asking for the collaboration of other associations connected to the active participation of the city. The Carpi Urban Centre (an association aiming to involve citizens in the improvement of the city), and Carpi2030 (a group of active citizens who looks at the Sustainable Development Goals of 2030 Agenda for a better environment) were engaged into the project to initiate a bottom-up process. The project aimed at creating a "campus" as a common stage for a wide and mixed community, well connected to existent activities, public services and open to its surroundings. The idea of the campus is also linked to the mindset of people who inhabit it to promote the idea to be part of a community and foster this attitude. A campus could also stimulate self-organised activities, networking, and cooperation among all the stakeholders included in its area.

3.2 The development of the Carpi Campus project

The Carpi Campus project was addressed with a creative mindset to inspire people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community (PPS, 2007).

From its very beginning, the cooperation with the different stakeholders provided different skills and contributed to knowledge sharing from different perspectives. The cooperation helped the group to expand its influence and to achieve its objectives sooner. The workflow of the project was based on a "Design Thinking" process, an approach to creative problem-solving which can be applied more broadly by people who are not designers (Schweitzer, Groeger and Sobel, 2016). To best describe this process, the "Double Diamond" helps because it represents a nonlinear scheme, and it consists of four phases beginning from an initial idea and ending with the delivery of a product or a service. The four phases are: discover, define, develop, and deliver.

The first phase, named "Discover" helps people understand the problem, and it involves speaking to and spending time with people who are affected by the issues (Design Council, 2015). This is a divergent phase which started with trainings and lectures and finished with an active workshop. The didactic lectures focused on Tactical Urbanism and strategies for a more sustainable city. The workshop aimed at reimagining the campus from a future perspective. This activity was organised by the Carpi2030 team. They asked students to reflect on their experience about schools' area and to establish the main issues to be solved also looking at potential aspects. Then, they had to imagine how the campus would be like in the future, sketching their visions on paper as a baseline for a plenary discussion. During the debate, students were also encouraged to think about the variety of relations with the surrounding (looking for associations, activities, parks, and other schools) to make the schools more open to the city and create a network of mutual connections. The second phase is named "Define" and it is a more convergent step about the definition of a well-focused challenge. After collecting needs, desires, and the visions from students,
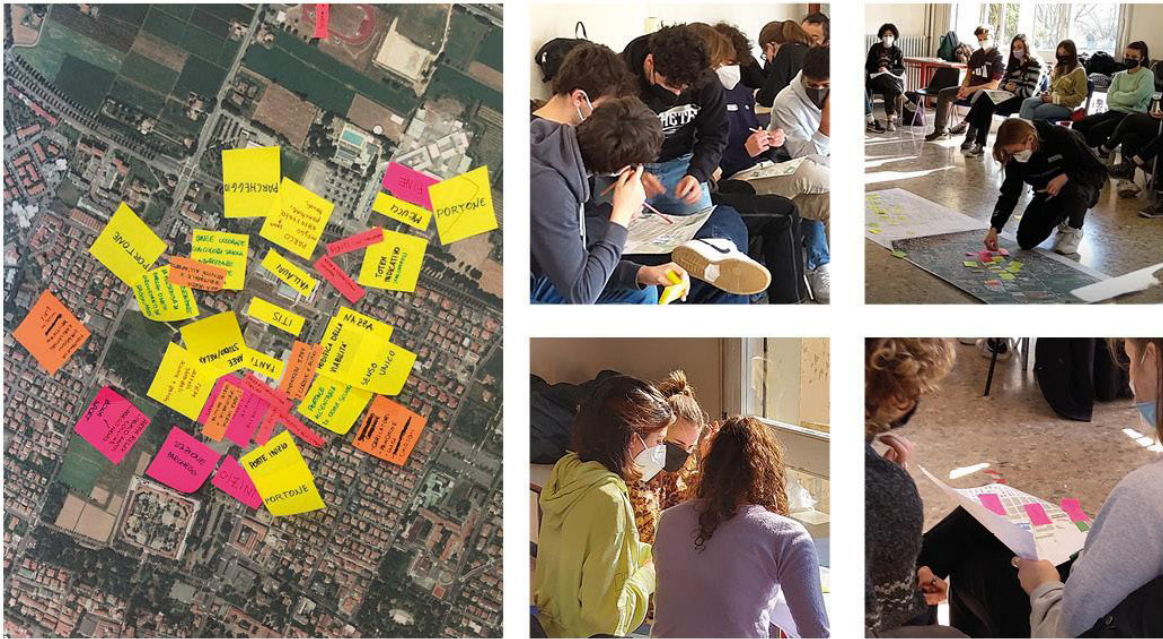
Figure 3. Pictures of the co-design phases with students (source: authors. Feb. 10th 2022)

Figure 4. Drawings of the students about how they imagine the new campus will be like
(source: authors. Feb. 10th 2022)

the leading team analysed what emerged and elaborated a design proposal based on four overlapping layers to develop a progressive intervention strategy. The four layers are individually designed, and each of them performs a specific function; however, only with the union of all is it possible to establish strategic connections between schools and their surroundings. The principal layer is named "The ribbon", and it is based on three elements placed at the cornerstones of the school area to mark the entrance. The second layer is named "Info-point"; it represents the schools, and it is placed near their entrances of each school as an intermediary between the building and the city. The info-points have the function to show the name of the institute and to promote the activities of the school. The third layer is a kind of "Booster" for sustainability, and it includes 17 elements spread within the area to raise awareness about the SDGs goals. The fourth layer acts as a "Deputy" for sustainable actions to promote a common behavioural change. These two last layers are conceived to promote a more sustainable lifestyle, as a kind of manifesto for a sustainable environment.

The third phase is named "Develop", and it is a divergent step aiming at encouraging people to give different answers to the defined problem, seeking inspiration from elsewhere and co-designing with peers. Various proposals for each layer of the strategy were developed, asking students to draw and share their ideas for the strategies. In this phase, a master's degree student of the Politecnico di Milano was engaged to develop a thesis on the overall project, with a specific focus on implementing the design strategy. That student was a former student of the scientific high school, so she had the opportunity to redesign the places she had once frequented to improve them.

The last phase is named "Deliver" and provides a selection of well-defined solutions for all the strategies. The graduating student collected the ideas from other students and checked their architectural feasibility, defining the most suitable in detail. These proposals were conceived as a short-term, low-cost, and scalable intervention and policies (Lydon and Garcia, 2015, p. 21). Lydon and Garcia (2015, p. 29) also state that Tactical Urbanism "is a way of making plans without the usual preponderance of planning, and it makes use of the creative potential unleashed by social interaction". In fact, that method can bridge the gap between cities and developers and citizens in the urban development process. This approach also encourages local resiliency because it helps citizens explore a nimbler approach to city-making in a way that transformations could be adjusted if conditions change. Tactical Urbanism is a tool that proactively addresses tension between bottom-up and top-down initiatives by creating a better and more responsive environment for all (Lydon and Garcia, 2015, p. 26), as it is for the Carpi Campus project.

Considering all the methods adopted, the overall project demonstrated a good combination between theory and practice, and this helped students to improve their ability to understand a given task, discuss with others to create a common vision, share their ideas with different languages (written, spoken, graphical), and, finally, participate to the experience giving added value to the city making process.

4. Findings: Intangible values matter

Through the "Impacts Assessment Framework", the research demonstrates how is possible to evaluate intangible values enhancing their importance. The Carpi Campus project has also demonstrated to youth how powerful their collective vision can be; it helped them to re-image everyday spaces, focusing on potentialities and giving a collective new identity. From the initial phase to the final one, the project has been developed as

a collaborative process able to engage different stakeholders, with a particular focus on students. Although the artworks of the project have not yet been implemented, several intangible values emerged. The biggest impact has been noted on young people and student community.

4.1 The intangible values of Placemaking in the Carpi Campus project
The placemaking process significantly contributed to the organisation of numerous cultural activities, which in turn galvanised the community to work together, creating more social values and greater awareness. From an educational perspective, participants gained valuable benefits, such as the opportunity to experiment with innovative teaching methods and to learn new skills (both soft and hard) that will impact participants for life. Giving value to places was the core of the Carpi Campus project, and this evidence also emerges if considering the main direction of this urban design: the reclamation of a street for sociability (with respect to Via B. Peruzzi, in which schools are located).

> *"The street was losing its social value and turned into a functional tool for rapid travel. [...] Pedestrian movement would allow the urban population to linger and repose, and as such to be able to develop spaces of interaction and sociability, rather than mere functionality"* (Madanipour, 2020, p. 11).
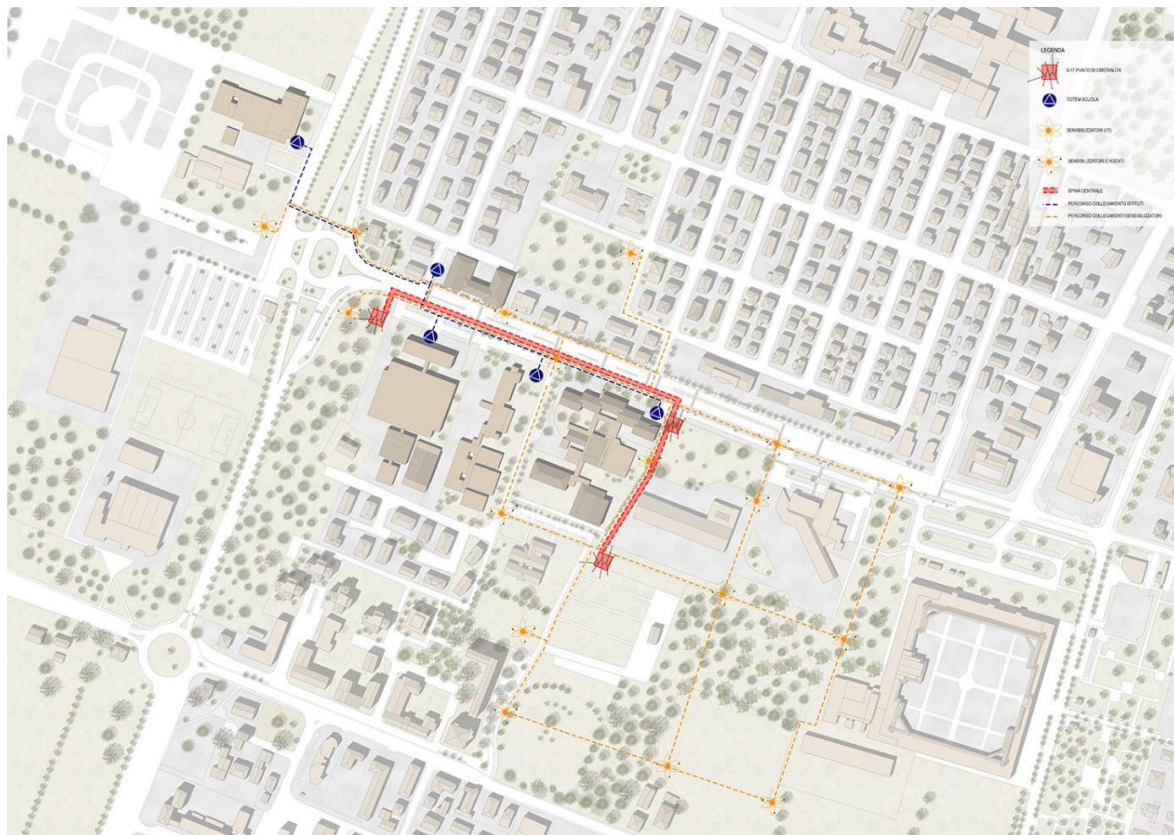

Figure 5. Concept of the project with the four strategy layers (source: layout from Faglioni, 2022)

Figure 6. Drawings of students about the elements of the four strategy layers
(source: authors. Mar. 22nd 2022)

"The value of such appropriations lies in their interruptive characteristics and transformative power of expression towards more equality and inclusion in public spaces" (Karimnia and Haas, 2020, p. 41).

4.2 Approach

Design thinking in Carpi Campus was treated as a systematic and explorative approach to addressing complex, wicked problems. This method adopted agile and innovative mindsets, enabling participants to think outside their imaginary. This creates a framework in which dynamic interactions between youth and other people are produced and where common ideas and solutions grow. The aim was not only to generate proposals but also to cultivate results that enhance the value and quality of the urban space surrounding the schools. This constructive approach also included principles of co-design and participatory design (Engholm, 2021, p. 55). Co-design, as defined by McKercher (2020), is "an approach to design with, not for, people" which fosters new ways of being and doing for people, encouraging learning from others and active involvement in the design process (McKercher, 2020, p. 14). In co-design, everyone could both teach and learn, as happens with the school's community in Carpi Campus experience. This participatory approach was necessary for developing a flexible response to the environment needs through the imagination of short-term, sustainable, and small-scale actions. By fostering this shared approach, the project addressed complex issues progressively, engaging people step by step, trying to trigger design abilities of them in imagining new future scenarios, functions, and activities.
For this sector, the case study has revealed new intangible values such as thinking potential, design thinking, and cooperation.

4.3 Community

In Carpi Campus project, teenagers were the main protagonists challenging themselves in a new inclusive process, building a shared vision for the future, and relationships, and creating a new inter-generational community. Schools played a complementary role in this process, acting as promoters of active citizenship and sustainability. They encouraged innovative teaching methods that educated a young community to perceive and transform a space starting from their desires. Feedback from the youth indicated that being understood, valued, appreciated, and listened to made them feel like an active participant in the radical changes occurring in their places. Daily, they acquired and matured a mutual

Figure 7. "Impacts Assessment Framework" for the evaluation of intangible values
of the Carpi Campus project (source: authors)

trust, not only among themselves but also with the other people and institutions involved. This trust-building, combined with the role of schools as active facilitators rather than passive listeners, fostered a sense of responsibility and agency among the youth regarding their future places. Through the experience, they became passionate and appreciative of the small things, recognising other's needs, experiencing new feelings and emotions shared with the community, and developing a sense of belonging. This is an important intangible value of the project that must be continually cultivated to be long-lasting. In this context, placemaking could also serve as an antidote to the general sense of hopelessness that youth often feel in Italian society and its political establishment, as outlined in the annual report made by Centro Studi Investimenti Sociali (CENSIS, 2023). For this sector, the case study has revealed the following values: inclusion, social cohesion and community well-being.

4.4 Places

This change of perception, from public spaces to places, is at the base of the placemaking process and it represents the starting point of Carpi Campus initiative. Through the engagement of all the school's community, it became possible to rethink the urban spaces around high schools, transforming them into new attractive places where students are at the centre of the design and various opportunities are boosted. Initially, the relationships between students were forced by a series of collaborative activities that were thought to involve them, and improve their linkage with environment. Over time, students gradually began to recognise themselves in these spaces and started to see them as places of interactions, able to consolidate and spontaneously generate occasions. This relationship infuses people with a sense of identity, belonging, and attachment to places, defining youth-friendly places where their sensations and memories flourish. "Youth-friendly places" are described as multifunctional public realms that are flexible to adapt to different needs and desires of youth, even if everyone is included. They are places where young people can have fun, feel safe, make new friends, and where their rights are respected because the place is "made" by them. Youth are aware of their lived experiences, and by participating in the placemaking process, they could bring hope and a sense of joyful to the realisation of their place (McKoy, Eppley and Buss, 2022, p. 9). As youth begin to develop a feeling of belonging to the place, the place itself gains value and is enriched with a new identity. This place-identity contributes to create a meaningful space within the city, where people can recognise their values and pass them on to future generations. The case study reveals the following values: new perception, and enhanced quality of life.

4.5 Communication

The value of a project does not only lie in its realisation, but also in its communication. Through communication the participants of Carpi Campus established a link between various stakeholders, the Municipality and citizens. For this project, conferences were organised to present the activities to both citizens and the City Administration. A series of interviews with reporters were then published in newspapers. This strategy established a new forum for dialogue and discussion. Citizens gained new perspectives about the area and its issues. These activities drew the attention to youth engagement, and the City Administration began to support the realisation of the Carpi Campus project, allocating a specific budget in the coming years. Additionally, to give more value to this project, it was promoted within the "Festival dello Sviluppo Sostenibile 2022" because the design drew attention to the SDGs and sustainability principles. To promote and make it even more attractive, a logotype was developed to transmit the objectives that guided the realisation of the project and allow them to be communicated effectively to all possible interlocutors. This logo was designed to establish a consistent visual identity of the project, encapsulating the ideals and references assumed for the definition of the process and, at the same time, of transmitting the intangible values identified by the project. In this sector, the case study demonstrated the following values: promotion between citizens and interviews with local newspapers.

5. Final discussion

The various experiences of placemaking, including the Carpi Campus project, have shown positive impacts on the communities involved and diverse results in the cities. Students were enthusiastic participants, sharing their passion and showing their commitment. By combining a bottom-up and top-down approach, it was possible to merge the everyday experience of students with the expertise of professionals in urban design. In the Carpi Campus experience, the direct engagement of youth to discover and understand their needs was crucial to making the design successful and aligned with the requirements of its users. Indeed, young people can envision a new urban strategy for cities by participating in placemaking processes, creating youth-friendly places where they are the main protagonists. This addresses two of the initial research questions: through youth involvement, "Is it possible to activate and shape places by integrating their needs and narrating their feelings and sensations?" This approach creates a powerful and long-lasting impact on the relationship between youth's lives and the places they inhabit.

This project also demonstrated that schools can easily become benchmarks for social activities for students, their families, and all citizens, due to their location within neighbourhoods and the fact that they relate to many stakeholders and group of people. Schools play a fundamental role in involving young people, who will be the primary users of the city in the future and are key actors to be engaged in these transformation processes. This addresses another research question that initially prompted the exploration of this topic.

However, it is on the "Impacts Assessment Framework" that it is necessary to focus the attention. This tool proved to help assess the intangible values of the placemaking project and allow to reflect on the goals achieved in the initial phases. The "Impact Assessment Framework" highlights the fact that values can be generated throughout the process, not

Figure 8. Examples of the communication about the project (A local newspaper article; the poster for the "Festival dello Sviluppo Sostenibile"; the visual identity and the logo; the presentation of the project to the city) (source: authors. Oct 11th 2022)

only at its conclusions. This tool gives importance to the inclusive process and how it is managed. Especially worth mentioning is the proposal of a common template that can interpret all placemaking designs, regardless of their different outcomes. As it is known, every project is unique and differs from another because the surrounding conditions change. What these projects share is the desire to trigger a transformation of places to produce more value than they already possess. This value is not just a matter of material and tangible elements, but also includes a variety of fundamental intangible values that change in response to the situation. This is the answer to the last research questions. For this reason, the "Impacts Assessment Framework" is thought to be flexible and customisable. Considering the cultural and physical environment and the specific goals of a project, the process itself could differ. Consequently the intangible values that stem from each step will be different. With the chance to tailor the framework, it is possible to evaluate different experiences to understand the strengths and weaknesses of many placemaking processes. This approach aims to improve these processes and make them more effective.

In conclusion, the version of the "Impacts Assessment Framework" that is presented here could be considered a "beta" version. It can be improved through its application to different projects and urban situations.

6. Conclusion

Although the importance of placemaking and engaging people in urban designs is recognised, the significant intangible values often go unacknowledged because they do not result in physical changes to urban spaces. These intangible values, however, are crucial for transforming urban area into meaningful places for the community. The "Impacts Assessment Framework" aims to measure these intangible impacts requiring ongoing stakeholder engagement. This flexible tool evolves and adapts to different contexts and participants, helping to identify and evaluate the added value of youth-focused placemaking efforts.

With the Carpi Campus project there was the opportunity to reflect on these intangible values that a placemaking process reveals from its first steps, even before the realisation of physical changes. By involving high schools' students in reshaping and activating the public spaces around schools, it was possible to image a campus with a stronger identity not only due to the material changes of the design proposal, but mostly for the youth protagonists within the overall process. In engaging students, they have shown passion and desire to participate actively in the challenge.

However, the Carpi Campus experience is not the only one analysed; a series of other activities and research have led to a progressive approach to placemaking with the involvement of young people which made it possible to assess the effectiveness of the "Impacts Assessment Framework". What has been achieved is many-fold: firstly, a clear awareness of the added values of a placemaking project when youth are engaged, and, secondly, how to assess the impacts of this process, with a frame of references applicable in such cases.

At its core, placemaking means coming together to create quality places where people want to live, work, play, and learn. The quality of place stems from a plethora of values affected by the places, the sense of community, the approach to urban change, and the communication about the project itself. The proposed frame of references that are

proposed considers these four sectors to evaluate a placemaking process focusing on the intangible values that arise from it. Through this framework, it is possible to evaluate other projects, understand the strengths and weaknesses of the placemaking process, and improve its effectiveness.

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